



AHI

AMERICAN HELLENIC INSTITUTE, INC.

October 25, 2010

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Aleco Haralambides, *President*
James Lagos, *Vice President*
Nick Karambelas, Esq., *Secretary*
Kostas Alexakis
Nicholas E. Chimicles, Esq.
Van Coufoudakis
James Pedas
Nick Larigakis
James L. Marketos, Esq.
Peter C. Pappas
Gene Rossides

AFFILIATES

AHI Business Network

Area Representatives

Andonis Neroulis, *President*
AHI-New York
Dr. George Moutsatsos, *President*
AHI-Delaware
Tina Papadopoulos, *President*
AHI-New England
Paul Sogotis, *President*
AHI-California
Mariyana Spyropoulos, *President*
AHI-Chicago

Staff

Nick Larigakis
Executive Director
C. Franciscos Economides
Director, Government Affairs
and Media Relations
Yola Pakhchanian
Director, Publications
Vasilios Kotsatos
Office Manager
Demetra Atsaloglou
Research Analyst

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the nationwide membership of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI), we write regarding the letter you received from nineteen Members of Congress, dated October 1, 2010, whereby they are urging your Administration to "actively encourage our NATO allies to offer Macedonia a formal invitation to become a member of [the NATO] alliance," at the forthcoming NATO Lisbon Summit in November.

They claim that the membership to NATO for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) should not be "negatively affected by bilateral issues with Greece" as it relates to the ongoing discussions between Greece and FYROM to resolve the name dispute issue and that the "name dispute issue does not bear on membership criteria."

We couldn't disagree more.

We commend your Administration for not supporting this position. We note the good remarks by Philip H. Gordon, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, when in a speech at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, on October 18, 2010, he stated, "Macedonia will join [NATO] once the dispute over its name is resolved."

The Members claim that FYROM has fulfilled all the criteria for membership. However, FYROM continues to be the intransigent party as it relates to its name dispute with Greece. FYROM must realize that in order to join NATO, it must focus on the fulfillment of NATO's good neighborly relations principle and the immediate settlement of the difference over the name. Greece is the biggest investor in FYROM and literally helps to sustain FYROM's precarious economy and reduce its large unemployment. Greece is also a leader in investment and economic development in Southeastern Europe, with over \$22 billion invested.

In total disregard of Greece, a trusted, faithful, loyal and proven ally, and with no regard over Greece's sensitivities and concerns within her own delicate neighborhood—the Bush Administration in November of 2004 irresponsibly and contrary to the best interests of the U.S.- recognized the FYROM as the “Republic of Macedonia.” This action has contributed greatly to FYROM's increasing intransigent stance. Admitting FYROM into NATO before resolving the name dispute would perpetuate instability in the region.

Greece has made a major compromise by proposing “a compound name for the country; a name that will distinguish it from both the Greek and Bulgarian part.” Greece's position is unambiguous. It has gone the extra mile. It wants a negotiated solution that will be valid internationally, in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions. This was a serious shift of tremendous importance from Greece's initial position. Unfortunately, this gesture has not been reciprocated from FYROM.

The authors of the letter claim that support is warranted based on FYROM's contributions in Afghanistan and other areas where it has supported NATO. If, however, you want to compare FYROM's contributions with that of Greece, there simply is none. Greece's contributions simply blow away any miniscule contributions by FYROM.

Greece today has 61 officers and 135 enlisted personnel in Afghanistan. They operate the Engineer Battalion in Kabul, assisting the Afghan government in its reconstruction efforts. Further, during this period, Greece is in charge of the Kabul International Airport.

Afghanistan has been a priority for Greek development policy. Since 2002, Greece has allocated approximately 100 million dollars to Afghanistan.

Greece is of vital importance for the projection of U.S. strategic interests in the region by virtue of among other factors, its geographic location and by being home to the most important naval base in the Mediterranean Sea, Souda Bay, Crete. There are numerous visits by U.S. military ships and planes to Souda Bay and its adjacent air base annually, and it is critical for the United States to deliver troops, cargo, and supplies to Afghanistan.

This was underscored by Bruce S. Lemkin, Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, when on March 19, 2009, he stated in part, “...Greece has been resolute in its support of operations in the struggles against terrorism and extremism, through the vitally important use of Souda Bay Air Field as landing base, unrestricted over-flights, and providing a continuous rotation of personnel to Afghanistan since 2002.”

Finally, Greece is a top contributor to the defense efforts of NATO, spending an estimated 3% of its GDP on defense, by percentage second only to the U.S., and is also an active participant in peacekeeping and peace-building operations conducted by international organizations, including the UN, NATO, the EU, and OSCE.

Mr. President, your Administration, should continue its efforts persuade FYROM to negotiate in good faith with Greece to resolve the name issue and to cease immediately irredentist propaganda against Greece. Only in this way will FYROM's aspirations to fully integrate into the EURO-Atlantic community be realized. The time is ripe for FYROM to demonstrate the maturity and the responsibility that a state needs in order to become a member of NATO.

While in the Senate, you were one of three original lead co-sponsors of Senate Resolution 300, which urged that the FYROM work with Greece within the framework of the United Nations process to reach a mutually acceptable official name for that country and achieve longstanding U.S. and U.N. policy goals.

In a statement that your campaign released to the Greek American community in October 2008, you stated:

"...[I] support the UN-led negotiations and believe that there can and should be an agreement between Skopje and Athens on a mutually-acceptable name that leads to greater stability in the Balkans."

However, the continuing intransigent and provocative actions by the government of the FYROM against its neighbor, Greece, poses a potential threat to stability in the Balkans, to the detriment of U.S. interests.

The United States can easily turn the situation around by informing FYROM that it supports the Greek government's major compromise of accepting "a compound name for their country, a name that will distinguish it from both the Greek and Bulgarian" part.

If FYROM refuses to cooperate, your Administration should consider withdrawing recognition of FYROM as was advocated in September 2008 by Senators Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME).

The immediate settlement of the name issue, in a way that is acceptable to Greece, will allow the United States' strongest ally in the Balkans to be the driving force for FYROM's membership to NATO and ultimately to the European Union. FYROM's "passport" to NATO and the European Union is Greece.

In our view, and in the view of many others, U.S. actions since 1992 regarding the FYROM name dispute have constituted an American foreign policy blunder that has damaged U.S. interests in the Western Balkans and harmed Greece, our key ally in the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean, for no sound reason.

A solution that satisfies **both** countries that is viable, honorable and mutually acceptable regarding the name issue and the immediate halting of all provocative actions against Greece will satisfy the interests of all the parties.

We appreciate the opportunity to bring this issue to your attention and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Aleco Haralambides
President



Nick Larigakis
Executive Director

cc: Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton
Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates
Deputy Secretary of State James B. Steinberg
Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns
Interim Chief of Staff to the President Pete Rouse
National Security Advisor Tom Donilon
Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia Philip Gordon
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia Tina S. Kaidanow
Director of Southern European Affairs Jess Bailey
U.S. Ambassador to Greece Daniel Smith
U.S. Ambassador to FYROM (“Republic of Macedonia”) Philip Reeker
Department of State Senior Greece Desk Officer Chris Snipes
Department of State FYROM (“ Republic of Macedonia”) Desk Officer Sammie Smith
The Congress